Spain and American Independence[1]
by
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The year 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of the rebellion against British rule of its thirteen colonies in North America. In 1776, approximately two and a half million people of European and African descent lived in those colonies, thinly spread for the most part across more than 430,000 square miles of territory. Most of the people of African descent (some 20 percent) had arrived as enslaved labor, and some of the people of European descent had arrived as criminals or indentured servants. Three dozen or more Indigenous groups also lived in or near the same territory, largely pushed out of their traditional homelands as Britain's colonies grew, but their numbers are difficult to estimate. At the same time, Great Britain included about eight million people and 231,000 square miles of territory, in other words, more than three times the population in just over half the territory of the thirteen colonies.

The colonies had limited experience of organized warfare or collective action. Great Britain, on the other hand, was arguably the most powerful monarchy in Europe at that time, with a well-organized military structure and ample experience of armed combat, most recently in the global war between 1756 and 1763. How, then, can we explain why the American colonies managed to defeat their powerful overlord? A large part of the answer lies in aid from countries anxious to cause trouble for Great Britain. It is a truism in international relations (and arguably in human relations as well) that 'your enemy's enemy is your potential friend,' or at least your potential ally. Gonzalo Quintero Saravia has written a brilliant new book about Spain's involvement in the American Revolution, with the apt title (translated into English) *The Enemy of my Enemy ... Spain in the War of Independence of the United States of North America*.[2] Quintero focuses on the period from 1775 to 1783, together with earlier developments that help to explain Spain's involvement in the war. This overview will focus on the same period, relying on Quintero's research and that of Larrie Ferreiro,[3] and William V. Wenger.[4] In their publications, they cite many other specialists of the eighteenth century and the American rebellion, for readers interested in learning more about America's war of independence.

In tracing why and how Spain became involved in aiding the American rebels in the late eighteenth century, it makes sense to begin several centuries earlier. Spain had established a presence in North America shortly after Hernán Cortés conquered the Aztec Empire in the early sixteenth century. The first viceroy of New Spain (Mexico), Antonio de Mendoza, whose tenure ran from 1535 to 1550, sent numerous expeditions toward the north, indicating Spain's intention to explore and plant colonies in that region. The settlement of St. Augustine, Florida, began to realize those intentions from 1565 onward, though land-based exploration proceeded only

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[2] Gonzalo M. Quintero Saravia, *El enemigo de mi enemigo… España en la Guerra de Independencia de los Estados Unidos de Norteamérica (1775-1783)* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 2025). An English translation is planned for the near future.

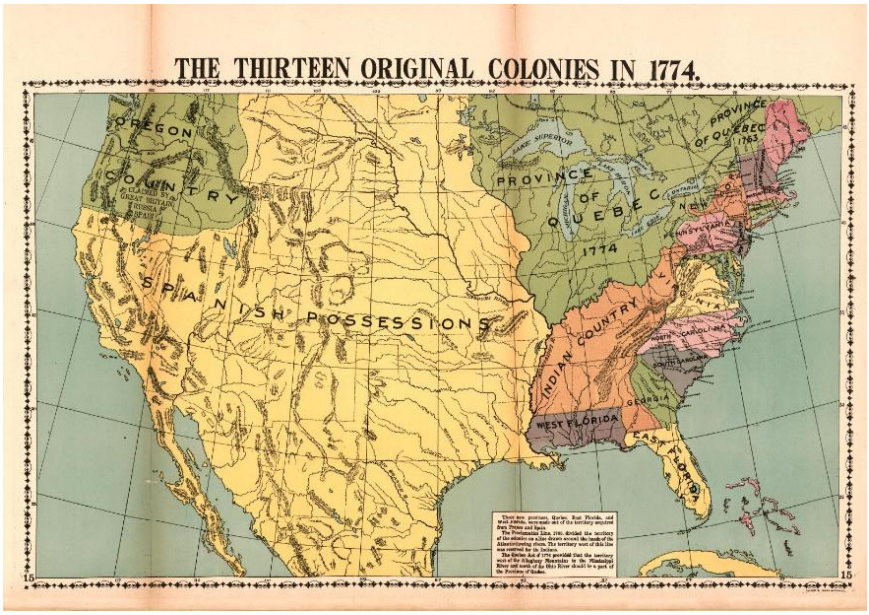
[3] Larrie D. Ferreiro, *Brothers at Arms: American Independence and the Men of France and Spain Who Saved It* (New York: Alfred A Knoph, 2016).

[4] William V. Wenger, *The Key to American Independence: Quantifying Foreign Assistance to the American Revolution* (Amazon Digital Publishing, 2018; Kindle edition, March 2, 2021).

sporadically in the next two centuries. As a result, Spanish settlements in North America were few and far between for the next century and a half.

That situation changed notably from the start of the eighteenth century. With the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714), a French Bourbon prince became king of Spain as Philip V; France became an ally rather than the traditional enemy; and Great Britain became the primary enemy. In the first half of the eighteenth century, Bourbon Spain fought in several wars against Great Britain on land and sea. The reasons are not hard to find. Britain's presence on the eastern seaboard of North America and its exploration far and wide in the Pacific posed a potential threat to Spain's existing American territories and the lands north of Mexico that Spain hoped to colonize. To defend Spanish interests in the far west of North America, King Philip V approved an ambitious survey of existing presidios in 1724–29 that mapped 9,000 miles of territory. By the mid-eighteenth century, Spanish interests in North America were well established, as was its 'familial' relationship with Bourbon France and an ongoing rivalry and enmity directed at Great Britain.

The global conflict between 1756 and 1763, known as the Seven Years' War in Europe, tested French strength against Great Britain, with disastrous results for France. In a humiliating defeat, France lost virtually all the territory it claimed in the Western Hemisphere, as well as in India and elsewhere. Bourbon Spain had joined the fight as a French ally in 1762, woefully unprepared. British forces captured both Havana and Manila, though treaty negotiations would return those crucial ports to Spain in exchange for ceding Florida to Great Britain. To the west of what had been Spanish Florida, the British crafted a new province of West Florida that included the Florida panhandle and the southern portions of present-day Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama. To compensate for Spanish support in the war, France ceded the vast territory of Louisiana to Spain by a secret treaty in 1762. In the short term, Louisiana caused more problems than profits to Spanish administrators, despite its potential for Spanish expansion northward. Moreover, it brought Spanish interests in North America into proximity and likely conflict with Great Britain.



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To gain a better understanding of the lands to the north of New Spain, King Charles III commissioned a survey in 1766–68, led by the marquess of Rubí, that covered 7,600 miles and mapped many of the dramatic features of the western landscape. In the far west, other Spanish expeditions by land and sea consolidated Spanish claims in North America. From the 1760s through the period of the American war of independence, those expeditions brought settlers north and established religious missions, presidios, and towns along the way.

Britain's thirteen colonies had profited from commerce with Spain, the Canary Islands, and the Spanish Caribbean since the seventeenth century, despite the British Navigation Acts that aimed to restrict such commerce. Merchants in Spanish and British territories alike were anxious to continue those ties and were disposed to resist British policies that might hurt their business. Nonetheless, as long as the thirteen colonies remained loyal to Great Britain, they were simply outposts of the home country and useful trading partners for Spain and various of its territories overseas. However, when political leaders in the colonies began to move in the direction of rebellion after about 1775, France and Spain had to decide whether to support the colonies if they tried to break away from Britain.

The principle of aiding their enemy's enemy was appealing, but France and Spain approached that possibility from very different perspectives. France had no remaining territorial interests in North America and therefore had nothing to lose by supporting rebels against a rival monarchy. French diplomats who knew the British colonial situation urged King Louis XVI to support a likely rebellion. Spain, on the other hand, had enormous territorial interests in the Americas—more than five million square miles in South, Central, and North America, together with the new threat the British posed from its new outpost in Florida, which Spain had only lost to Britain in 1763. In short, Spain had an enormous amount to lose in North America in challenging the British. Moreover, supporting the rebellious colonies of another monarchy risked inspiring rebellion in Spanish America as well. The Spanish government had implemented a variety of important administrative reforms in Spanish America after its losses in the Seven Years' War. These reforms tended to reinforce the cohesion and loyalty of the empire. Nonetheless, serious risks remained if Spain chose to aid the American rebels.

More than a year before the American rebellion broke out, Spain and France were secretly aiding leaders in the colonies. At the instigation of Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais, with the acquiescence of the French king, a sham corporation called Roderigue Hortalez & Company was established in May 1775 by the Spaniard Luis de Unzaga. Long before France and Spain were willing to openly support the Americans, Hortalez & Company coordinated clandestine shipments of money, arms, ammunition, supplies, and clothing to the potential rebels. The shipments were initially financed by two million French pounds (*livres tournois*), of which the French government contributed half and Spain the other half, provided through the Spanish embassy in Paris. To maintain as much secrecy as possible, the shipments were channeled through the neutral Dutch free port of St. Eustatius in the Caribbean, though the British eventually realized what was happening.

When the General Congress of the thirteen colonies issued a Declaration of Independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776, the prospects for success were questionable at best. Even with clandestine aid from France and Spain, the colonies were ill-prepared to mount a successful military campaign against their powerful British overlords. Everything depended on continued outside support. American envoys in Paris, notably Benjamin Franklin, Arthur Lee, and Silas Deane, met with French officials, helping to move the French government closer to open support. The Spanish government was more circumspect but granted loans and non-refundable aid to the

revolutionaries, opening a secret line of credit in Spanish banks equivalent to an estimated $17 million in 2024 dollars. In addition, as a neutral power Spain opened its ports in both the Iberian Peninsula and the Americas to the rebels' small navy, its privateers, and private traders transporting supplies for the rebels—tactical support that was essential for sustaining the rebellion in its initial stages.

The rebel victory over British forces at Saratoga in upstate New York in September of 1777 marked an important juncture in the war, aided by arms arriving through the complicated supply network coordinated by Roderigue Hortalez & Company. However, rebel losses thereafter meant that the conflict was far from over when General George Washington led his 12,000 troops into winter quarters in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. In addition to Hortalez & Company, various established Spanish commercial firms with business ties to the thirteen colonies had begun to provide weapons and supplies to the rebels. Gardoqui and Sons of Bilbao played a prominent role in that regard. It is no exaggeration to say that Washington's troops survived the harsh winter of 1777–78 due to the blankets, uniforms, boots, and tents provided by Gardoqui and Sons. William Wenger's careful estimation of foreign aid to the rebels was unable to place a monetary value on the contributions by private companies, but they were certainly important, especially in the first years of the rebellion.

At the same time, the new governor of Spanish Louisiana, Bernardo de Gálvez, instituted policies designed to expand agriculture in the territory and increase the number of males who could serve as soldiers if Spain directly entered the conflict against Great Britain. Both aims could be served by increasing the enslaved population, and Gálvez issued an edict in November 1777 authorizing credit for the purchase of slaves in Guinea and their introduction into Louisiana. In the four decades that Spain held Louisiana, the population of enslaved Africans would rise to nearly 21,000 persons. Gálvez also worked to attract the loyalty of the remaining Indigenous groups in the region, which had suffered grievous demographic losses after the arrival of Europeans a century earlier. Their numbers were just beginning to recover by the time the American rebellion began, and Gálvez followed the example of the French and British in conveying honors and gifts to the various Indigenous groups, including arms, munitions, and alcohol, which Spain's Laws of the Indies specifically prohibited.

Gálvez also established policies that favored French merchants in Louisiana and thwarted the activities of the British on the Mississippi River, especially smugglers who had been largely left alone earlier. Gálvez's commercial policies aimed to harm British interests, increase tax revenues, and attract the loyalty of the French citizenry, and those policies had considerable success even before Spain officially joined the war effort against Great Britain.

France signed a treaty with the rebels in February of 1778. Spain continued to act unofficially. In the words of don José Moñino y Redondo, Count of Floridablanca and Charles III's most powerful minister, Spain's approach was "to prepare for war as if it were inevitable, but to do everything possible to avoid it." Gálvez carried out that approach by establishing a network of spies and using New Orleans as a base to collect news about the progress of the rebellion and British strength in Mobile and Pensacola in West Florida. Gálvez maintained the semblance of Spanish neutrality by allowing both British ships and anti-British raiders and privateers to use the port of New Orleans. In response to British complaints, Gálvez vigorously defended his policies as appropriate for a neutral power, while ensuring that American rebels in Louisiana did nothing to provoke a British declaration of war against Spain.

Ironically, Spain's King Charles III was more willing than his chief minister, Floridablanca, to openly confront the British, but eventually they both recognized that Spanish interests could

only be served by joining the fight. Rather than allying directly with the rebels, however, Spain signed a treaty of defensive and offensive alliance with France in the French war against Great Britain. This alliance—the Treaty of Aranjuez, signed on April 12, 1779—included a substantial list of Spanish objectives:

1 – Recovery of Gibraltar, which had been in British hands since 1704;
2 – Capture of the Mobile River and the fort of Mobile in British West Florida;
3 – Recovery of Pensacola and all the coast of Florida near the Bahama Channel, so that it would remain free from all foreign domination;
4 – Expulsion of the English from the Bay of Honduras, and the enforcement of the clause in the Treaty of Paris of 1763 prohibiting British establishments in Honduras or in other Spanish territories;
5 – Revocation of the privilege conceded to the British to cut dyewood on the coast of Campeche;
6 – Recovery of the island of Menorca in the Western Mediterranean, which had been in British hands since 1708.

In other words, Spain's participation in the war against Great Britain was firmly grounded in Spanish reasons of state and a desire to maintain a certain distance from the rebels. French interests expressed in the Treaty of Aranjuez were also grounded in reasons of state.

1 - Repeal of treaty clauses that barred the king of France from carrying out whatever land or sea construction at Dunkirk that he deemed necessary;
2 - Expulsion of the English from the island and fishing grounds of Terranova (Newfoundland);
3 - Freedom of trade in the East Indies, and the freedom to acquire and fortify such establishments as the king of France deemed convenient;
4 - Recovery of Senegal and freedom of trade on the coasts of Africa beyond English territories;
5 – Irrevocable possession of the island of Dominica in the Caribbean;
6 - Abolition or entire fulfillment of the treaty of commerce concluded in Utrecht in 1713 between France and England.

In exchange for Spain's decision to enter the war, France would shift its priorities to reinforce Spanish aims in Europe and South America.

Because France had few remaining interests in the Western Hemisphere, French support for the American rebellion can easily be portrayed as a selfless defense of liberty, in the finest Enlightenment tradition. Nonetheless, France as well as Spain based support for the American rebels on reasons of state, since the rebellion was part of a global war aimed at reducing British power. As the war continued, Britain became increasingly isolated, as a "league of armed neutrality," promoted by Russia, was joined by other European powers. For example, the Dutch provided loans before, during, and after the rebellion, which reinforced French and Spanish aid, and Sweden sent several dozen military officers to advise the American Continental Army.

As soon as Spain declared war, Bernardo de Gálvez came into his own as a skilled military strategist and an inspiring commander. Before his appointment as governor of Louisiana, Gálvez had fought against the Apaches. He had also studied their culture and social structure and respected

their fighting skills. As a result, he approached the Indigenous groups in the Louisiana territory with an eye toward gaining their loyalty and including Indigenous warriors among his troops. As a civil governor, Gálvez also knew the importance of winning the loyalty of the French population of Louisiana, who had rebelled against the first Spanish governor, Antonio de Ulloa. The military expedition of Alexander O'Reilly had put down that rebellion and consolidated Spain's acquisition of Louisiana, but his victory had not guaranteed the loyalty of the population. Gálvez's early policies benefitting the French citizenry, his open character, and, perhaps most importantly, his marriage to Felicitas St. Maxent, a native of French Louisiana, eventually persuaded the local population that they would benefit from Spanish rule.

Shortly after Spain entered the war, Gálvez conquered British outposts in West Florida on the banks of the Mississippi River at Manchac (Sept. 7, 1779) and Baton Rouge (Sept. 21, 1779). The following year Gálvez conquered Mobile and then set his sights on Pensacola. Having to defend against Spanish attacks in the south, the British were unable to concentrate their forces against George Washington's Continental Army elsewhere, which was immensely helpful to the rebels' cause. Moreover, Gálvez' capture of Pensacola in 1781 meant that the Spanish controlled all West Florida, which prevented the British from using the Mississippi River to open an offensive drive in the west.

As Gálvez assembled the forces to confront the British, he insisted on the importance of merit among his troops, regardless of their ethnicity. His forces would include a varied combination of fighting men from Europe and the Americas. Troops from the Iberian Peninsula included the following regiments: Navarre; Mallorca; Guadalajara; Spain; Aragon; Soria; the Light Infantry Volunteers of Catalonia; and the Regiments of the Prince and of the King. Foreign troops in the service of the Spanish war effort included the Regiment of Hibernia; the Walloon Infantry Regiment of Flanders; and the Dragoons of America. Troops from Spanish America included the Regiment of Fixed Infantry of Havana; the Company of Riflemen of Havana; the Battalion of Free Browns of Havana; the Colored Militia of New Orleans; and warriors from various Indigenous groups.

In addition to Galvez's successful military actions in the south, Spain's strategic and financial aid to the rebels, in close coordination with the French, tipped the balance of the American Revolutionary War in favor of the rebels in 1781. That outcome could not have been predicted a year earlier, when the British controlled New York and most of the Eastern Seaboard and the rebels were short of supplies, money, and manpower. Urgent requests from American envoys succeeded in getting more funding from the French court, but that was not enough to keep the rebellion going without more outside support and significant victories.

In the spring of 1780, Spain sent a large contingent of more than twenty ships and some 11,000 men to Havana as a staging area for the final conquest of Florida and an invasion of Jamaica thereafter. The French sent two expeditionary forces with 5,000 troops to join the Spaniards. In Madrid, José de Gálvez, Bernardo's uncle and a government minister on the Council of the Indies, learned that Spanish naval commanders in the West Indies were not inclined to help his nephew's campaign against Pensacola and that French and Spanish forces needed better coordination. Consequently, he dispatched a trusted aide, Francisco de Saavedra, to the West Indies.

Saavedra's efforts resulted in the successful campaign against Pensacola, and thereafter he worked with the French vice-admiral, the count de Grasse, to coordinate aid to Washington's Continental Army. De Grasse had returned to the West Indies with broad discretionary powers and the audacity to use them. When French planters declined to provide the funds that General Washington needed in New York, Saavedra obtained the money in Havana for de Grasse to deliver.

De Grasse first took his full squadron from Santo Domingo to Chesapeake Bay and won a famous victory against the British (Sept. 5, 1781), who had underestimated the force that would attack. With the British unable to reinforce their compatriots in the north, George Washington's army and the count of Rochambeau's French troops were able to isolate the British forces at Yorktown. The money provided by Spain by way of de Grasse paid the soldiers of the Continental Army in hard currency, forestalling a threatened mutiny in New York. The resulting Franco-American victory at Yorktown (Oct. 19, 1781) marked the end of military operations in the region and the beginning of the end for Britain's hopes for defeating the American rebellion.

Although Yorktown and several other important battles on land figure prominently in the history of the American Revolution, naval engagements predominated in the broader global conflict. In 1775, Great Britain had 117 warships available, while France had fifty-nine. With Spain's declaration of war against Great Britain in June of 1779, France and Spain together had 121 warships, while Great Britain, with ninety warships at that point, was forced on the defensive. Naval operations during the war involved the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, the Mediterranean and Caribbean Seas, and the Gulf of Mexico.

Naval historians are aware of the importance of naval encounters during the war, but few acknowledge the contributions of Spanish ships, commanders, and sailors. Spanish actions in the Caribbean, the Gulf of Mexico, and the Mediterranean inevitably drew British vessels away from the coasts of North America. In the Mediterranean, a combined Hispano-French force led by General Louis de Crillon invaded Menorca late in 1781. Crillon was born in France and had served with distinction in the French army before transferring to the Spanish army, where he rose to the highest rank. Crillon captured Menorca and its strategic deep-water port of Mahón in February of 1782 after a five-month siege and then turned his sights on Gibraltar—the most important Spanish objective in the war. The siege of Gibraltar by Spanish and French sea and land forces lasted from June 1779 to February 1783, at enormous cost. Although the siege ultimately failed to dislodge the British, defending Gibraltar and resupplying the garrison there required huge efforts and funds that Britain would otherwise have spent fighting the American rebels.

In the Atlantic, Luis de Córdova's Spanish fleet captured British convoys headed to America with trade goods and military supplies, which also hindered British efforts to defeat the rebellion. In the Caribbean, Spain captured the Bahamas in 1782. Britain launched several expeditions from Jamaica during the war to gain a foothold in the heart of Spain's American empire, but Matías de Gálvez, Bernardo's father and the captain general of Guatemala, succeeded in defending Spanish territories against incursions. Not only did the British expeditions fail, but their dispatch led to a significant weakening of the defenses of Jamaica, Britain's richest colony in North America. It was no secret that Bernardo de Gálvez aimed to attack Jamaica once Florida had been secured, and the threat to Jamaica was a serious preoccupation for the British.

By 1783, with the combatants exhausted, diplomats continued the struggle with pen and ink that had been fought by weapons during the previous eight years. Spain's representative at the French court, Pedro Pablo Abarca, the tenth count of Aranda, would play a crucial role in the diplomatic negotiations that would finally end hostilities. The Treaty of Paris in September of 1783 covered interconnected negotiations between Great Britain and four of its antagonists in the war: the rebellious colonies; France; Spain; and the Netherlands. King Charles III and his ministers in Madrid were most concerned with the Iberian Peninsula and, to a lesser extent, Spain's position in Europe. Aranda had a broader vision that included the likely ambitions of the United States to expand toward the west and south into lands currently under Spanish rule.

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Although the newly independent republic of the United States was widely perceived as weak and disunited in 1783, Aranda knew that the situation would change, if not in the immediate future, then surely in the longer term. It was therefore necessary for Spain to take a much broader view that included Spain's interests in North America as well as in Europe. Aranda presented his views about the areas of difference between Spain and the United States in a secret memorandum to Charles III.[5] The differences included the borders of Florida and West Florida; the control of navigation on the Mississippi River; relations with Indigenous groups; and relations with African Americans. It is to Aranda's credit that his reasoning prevailed at the Spanish court.

When historians discuss outside support given to the American rebels, they almost invariably emphasize French aid as the most important factor in the American victory. It is certainly true that France contributed far more in material terms than Spain, and vastly more than the Dutch and other European states. However, most historians deal only in generalities and lack specific sums and chronologies for foreign aid to the American rebels. By contrast, William V. Wenger's detailed study of a vast array of published research quantifies the value of most types of aid for each year of the war. Wenger's findings suggest some interesting conclusions. In the decade before 1775, private parties and commercial firms in France and Spain provided aid to American political leaders unofficially but with tacit permission from their governments. Because the aid was

[5] "Memoria secreta presentada al Rey de España por el Conde de Aranda, sobre la independencia de las colonias inglesas en América, después del Tratado de París de 1783," by Pedro Pablo Abarca de Bolea, Count of Aranda (Madrid: Biblioteca Nacional de España, MSS/12966/33).

unofficial, it is not possible to determine its total monetary value. However, in the crucial first year and a half of the rebellion, the total value of Spain's clandestine aid to the rebels far exceeded the aid provided by France,[6] a fact that many historians fail to recognize. Without Spanish aid in those early months, the rebellion could easily have been crushed.

Country	France	Spain	Netherlands*	Notes
1763 to 1775	0	0	0	Aid was provided in these years by private parties in Europe with permission, but no direct expense to the nations
1776	1,393,302 livres and £300,000	6,870,000 livres	0	Pounds Sterling numbers are computations of gunpowder costs
1777	8,359,812 livres and £4,800	11,105,000 livres and 70,000 pesos	0	Overt significant foreign aid increased after the Battle of Saratoga
1778	25,355,279 livres	8,000,000 reales	0	Beginning of direct French naval aid to the Americans
1779	0	0	0	French and Spanish aid for 1779 was accounted for in 1778 numbers
1780	24,853,100 livres	1,066,906 reales and £6,000	0	Major direct military aid
1781	37,134,921 livres and $2,111,528	1.2 M livres 5,000,000 reales and $69,444	1,000,000 guilders and $32,000	U.S. dollars are presumed contemporary dollars.
1782 -1783	15,423,851 livres	0	0	Europe, in general contributed approximately 3,000,000 livres; countries not specified
After 1783	0	0	loans	Netherlands made significant loans to the Americans in the decade of the 1780s
Grand Totals	115,520,265 livres ", £304,800 and $2,111,528	19,175,000 livres, 14,066,906 reales, 70,000 pesos £6,000 and $69,444	1,000,000 guilders and $32,000	All numbers are presented in contemporary currencies without regard to conversion factors

Once France officially allied with the rebels in 1778, French aid became far greater than aid from Spain, and that is what most historians emphasize. Despite that great expense, France gained none of the objectives stated in the Hispano-French treaty of 1779 that brought Spain into

[6] Wenger, *Key to American Independence*, Appendix C.

the war, apart from the satisfaction of seeing the British stripped of their American colonies. Spain, by contrast, gained all the objectives expressed in that treaty, apart from capturing Gibraltar, which was admittedly Spain's most important objective. Even though the three-year effort to capture Gibraltar failed, it drew British forces away from America and prevented a concerted effort to defeat the rebels. Moreover, the campaigns of Bernardo de Gálvez along the Gulf coast and the lower Mississippi River prevented the British from attacking the rebels from the south and west. Once Gálvez secured West and East Florida, the threat to Jamaica was crucial in persuading the British to make peace. Moreover, Spanish naval actions in the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, the Caribbean, and the Gulf of Mexico, often in collaboration with the French, forced the British to divide their strength and ultimately to lose control of their thirteen American colonies. In short, Spain's contributions and military actions played an important part in that outcome, which George Washington fully acknowledged, both during the war and thereafter.

The United States would continue to maintain cordial relations with Spain for the remainder of Charles III's reign (d. 1788). His successor, Charles IV, had scarcely begun his reign when the French Revolution erupted, forcing reevaluations of many prior diplomatic alliances. Even so, the Treaty of San Lorenzo of Friendship, Commerce, and Navigation between Spain and the United States of America, signed in Spain on October 27, 1795, reinforced the ties that had linked the countries for two decades.

Aid to the American rebels from France undoubtedly contributed to the bankruptcy of the government that ushered in the French Revolution in 1789. During the revolutionary period, the monarchies of both France and Spain would be shattered. Moreover, with the disruptions of the Napoleonic Wars, Spanish Louisiana passed into French hands and was then sold to the United States in 1803. Ironically, however, Spain's loss of Louisiana avoided a struggle with the United States that had become inevitable.

As the United States commemorates the 250th anniversary of the victory of the American rebels over their British overlords, it is fitting to remember the important role that Spain played in that victory and the ties of friendship between Spain and the United States that were forged in the crucible of that conflict.